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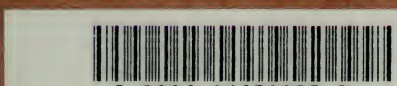

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DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS,

THE BEST AND *CHEAPEST:*

BEING ONE OF A

SERIES OF LETTERS

ON THE

COMMON SCHOOL SYSTEM.

EXTRACTED FROM

"THE CHURCH" NEWSPAPER.

TORONTO:
H. ROWSELL, PRINTER, KING STREET.

1853.

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ON DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS.

DEAR SIR:

I proceed to notice the Chief Superintendent's most certainly reckless assertion that Denominational Schools would "not only cost the people five-fold (!) what they have now to pay for School purposes, but would leave the youth of minor religious persuasions, and large portions of the poorer youth of the country, without any means of education upon terms within the pecuniary resources of their parents, unless as paupers, or at the expense of their religious faith."

I beg particular attention to the three assertions in the above statement of the Chief Superintendent—that Denominational Schools would cost *five-fold* as much as the present system —that they would be oppressive to "the minor religious persuasions," and to the poor, by leaving them without education, unless indeed as paupers, or as traitors to their faith! Believe me, these assertions were not made but as the result of subtle consideration: for if true—and who would doubt the word or the accurate information, on such a subject, of the Reverend Chief Superintendent!—the mass of an irreligious people—and are not all people majorically irreligious?—would never consent to Denominational Schools, were they proved to be holy as Heaven and necessary as the Gospel. No one knows better than the Rev. EGERTON RYERSON, D.D., the telling effects of such insidious statements, containing appeals to the low arrogance of idle pauperism, to the bitter pride of the mere sectarian, and even to the sincerity of the pious amongst the "minor religious persuasions." Alas that he should condescend to use such weapons, regardless of the great inaccuracy of his assertions.

The gross impropriety of the statements under consideration I intend to prove in this letter, by showing—

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1st, That Denominatioal Schools will NOT "cost the people five-fold more than they now pay."

2nd, That "the youth of minor religious persuasions" will NOT "be left without the means of education, save at the expense of their faith;" but that on the contrary *they* will have more educational and religious advantages than under the present system.

3rd. That a "large portion of the poorer youth of the country" will NOT "be left without the means of education save as paupers;" but that, on the contrary, the education, secular and religious, of the poor, will be much more efficiently cared for than under the present system.

I will proceed then, first, to state a plan for combining the religious and secular education of our youth by the establishment of Denominational Schools—a plan which will, if it be ever fairly carried out, I am convinced, vindicate the accuracy of these statements. I propose then, that a Provincial School-law shall be enacted in substance as follows:

1st. That any religious demomination, or separate congregation, which desires to establish a Common School of its own in any particular locality, shall have the legal right to claim for that purpose the school assessment of its own members, and their corresponding share of the Provincial or local educational grant.

2d. That the appointment of the Teacher, with all other internal regulations of such school, shall be in the Minister and lay officials, "as churchwardens, elders, or class leaders," &c., of said denomination in such locality.

3d. That such Denominational School shall not interfere with the right of the school-section in which it is situated to establish other denominational, or non-religious schools.

4th. That where in any school-section there are only Denominational Schools, then, the parents or guardians not belonging to the denomination or denominations unto which such school or schools belong, shall have a legal right to send their children to such denominational schools, provided there

be no other within———distance: Provided always, that in such a case the school assessment of parents so sending their children, and their corresponding share of the Provincia grant, shall then be paid to the denominational school to which they send their children; such parents also paying their equal share of such further tax as the managers of the school may find it necessary to impose.

5th. That parents or guardians not belonging to the Denomination to whose school they send their children shall have a legal right to require that they learn no catechism, or other religious formulary, the Bible only excepted, but such as they, the parents, approve.

6th. That the poor shall, without payment, have the same legal right with those who pay to send their children to any school, upon their solemn declaration of their inability to pay: the authorities of such school having a claim upon a public fund, to be established for that purpose for a certain rate of payment for all such scholars. In case of supposed imposition, an appeal laying to the council of the township in which such school is situated.

7th. That where there is but one school in a section, whether it be denominational or otherwise, it shall have the right to the use of the schoolhouse for the time being; but that, where there shall be more than one school, and only one schoolhouse, it shall rest with the majority of the inhabitants of such section to say, from year to year, which school shall have the use of it.

8th. That parents or guardians, not belonging to any denomination which shall have established a school of its own under the sanction of this Provincial law, shall *not* have a legal right to send their children, under the exemptions aforesaid, to said school, if there be a school of their own denomination, or one non-religious, either in their own or a neighboring school-section, within———distance. Nevertheless, be it enacted that, if such parents shall be content to subject their children to all the regulations and teachings, religious or

otherwise, of such school, then they *shall* have a legal right to send their children to said denominational school, even though they, the parents, do not belong to that particular denomination—subject always to payments hereinbefore provided in such cases.

9th. That where no denominational school is established, then the majority of the inhabitants shall have a legal right, as now, to establish a school on such basis as they see fit, and to assess *all* the inhabitants for its support, excepting only such persons as may be sending their children to some neighboring denominational school, under the conditions hereinbefore provided.

10th. That all Common Schools, denominational or otherwise, shall publish annually, in the nearest newspaper, a tatement of their entire receipts and expenditure.

11th. That it shall be competent for the Government to appoint inspectors of *all* schools receiving public money, denominational as well as others, whose duty it will be to see that the teachers are of competent ability, that the schools are properly conducted, and that the advance of the pupils in secular knowledge is satisfactory.

Such is the outline of the plan for denominational schools, which I earnestly recommend to serious and unprejudiced consideration. I do not, of course, pretend that it is perfect in all its details—still less do I think that it is all that Christians, and Christian legislators ought to desire; but I do most earnestly contend, that it is immeasurably better than our present system, and capable, even in this religiously-divided land, of being beneficially and satisfactorily worked.

That the scheme I have thus propounded fully supports the statements with which I set out, to the complete confusion of the startling assertions of the Chief Superinteudent with which this letter commenced, is, I hope, sufficiently clear; a little additional evidence on some of the particular points I wish to substantiate, and a few further explanatory remarks, however, may not be thrown away.

First, as to the expense. The plan I have proposed, instead of "costing the people five-fold more than the present system does not ask one farthing more than *their own just proportion* of the public funds. Again; where there are not children enough to form two schools, and yet a denominational school is established, I provide that such school shall be bound to receive the rest of the children in such school-section; consequently there is no plea for increased expenditure; the only difference in such case, between the present system and the one I propose, being that the school is under especial religious direction, instead of being entirely secular. While in towns or villages no increased expenditure will be needed, because there will be a sufficient number of children of different denominations to form schools abundantly large, especially including the children of the minor sects, and those of no denomination, who would from choice attend the denominational schools.

But it seems probable, taking into consideration the vastly increased efficiency which would be given to our Common Schools by the religious supervision I am advocating, that their cost would be *absolutely less*, perhaps very much less, than under the present system; and for these reasons; first, because the ministers and lay officials, taking a much deeper, because religious interest in the schools, than is done by the present township superintendents, trustees, &c. &c., the Schools would be much more efficiently and economically managed; and secondly, because from the personal efforts of the various Ministers and their friends, excited to exertion by the *religious* as well as intellectual advantages which they would hope the children would derive from their schools, *a much larger average of attendance would be secured throughout the Province than is now the fact*; and thus the average expenditure would be *lessened*, instead of increased five-fold, while the benefits of a sound education would be much *more generally* diffused than at present.

The fact is, that our present Provincial system of Common

School Education is most expensive, and is causing great dissatisfaction throughout the Province.—From the manner in which the Report of Common Schools is published, it is perhaps quite impossible for the people in general to arrive at a knowledge of what is the real cost to the Province of education in proportion to the instruction given.

For instance, from the uncertain manner in which the returns are made, the real attendance of children cannot be discovered; so, from the like uncertainty, in the account of local school expenses in the different sections, the actual average expense is a mystery; all of which incertitude is most fortunate for the reputation of the Government Education Office, and especially of its principal Official, the Chief Superintendent! But, that it is so costly that Denominational Schools may be sought on the score of mere economy, two or three brief facts may show.

In 1849 the Chief Superintendent of Education gave the average of attendance on the schools throughout the Province at 8½ to 10, and the average cost of education for each child as 15s. 1¾d. per annum. Now a friend of mine, a staunch Reformer, deep in the mysteries of local legislation during the short-lived days of District Municipal Councils, was startled at these returns, believing them, from his previous knowledge, to be totally incorrect; he therefore probed the matter thoroughly as respects the Niagara District; and found the results, from the public returns of the "Niagara District School Report," to be as follows:—

Average of attendance as 4 to 10, and the average expenditure per child to be £1 10s. 7½d. per annum. And this is exclusive of the cost of fuel, school-houses, and superintendence, local and general.

The gentleman who kindly gives me these statistics, declares that 40 per cent ought to be added for extras, the average expense given above being merely calculated from the teachers' salaries. These statements he has published in numerous letters, and defying contradiction, has not received it, as to any of his staple facts.

The expensive and at the same time the very unsatisfactory working of our present School system was also ably exposed in a letter of Mr. ANGUS DALLAS, a few weeks ago, to the *British Colonist*. He states that in Toronto the average of the attendance of the children between 5 and 16 years of age upon the Common Schools is only 18 per cent.! In Hamilton only 16 per cent.! In Kingston only 25 per cent.! While the average cost of Common School education, exclusive of the expense of School apparatus, rent, repairs, building, and Government Educational Machinery, is in Toronto 18s. 8½d. per head; in Hamilton 33s. 2½d.; in Kingston £2 1s. 11d.! "These are the facts," he adds, "with respect to the average attendance and the cost, agreeable to the criterion established by the Common School Act." He quotes as follows from the Report of the Toronto City School Superintendent: "Mr. BARBER says 'It will naturally be expected that in my official capacity I should express an opinion regarding the Free School system, and I do not hesitate in doing so. As regards numbers, one of the effects of Free Education has been to place upon the rolls of our schools a much larger number of pupils than was exhibited when the rate-bill system was in operation; but as regards average attendance, the comparison of those who regularly attend schools with the gross number on the rolls, is greatly in favour of the latter. It will be perceived that the large number of 3,059 pupils are returned as being on the roll, while the average attendance under the most favourable circumstances of season exhibits only 1428. In fact, the average attendance under the Free School system has been so irregular and disproportionate as to call for some decided action on the part of the Board to check the evil. As regards the average attendance at our schools, another effect of Free Education has been to deteriorate its character: that is to say, the more advanced, the more respectable, and the older pupils have to a considerable extent withdrawn from our Common Schools, leaving their places to be supplied by very young children, and a large number of pupils whose

parents have omitted or neglected to take care that their children were regular in attendance, or properly supplied with the books necessary for their improvement."

But further, my own experience more than corroborates these statements. In my immediate neighbourhood, I should say, the expense of the school upon actual attendance was about £2 10s. per child. While in the village near me the returns, as accurately as I could get them, for the last year but one are as follows: Number of children of school ages 255; the number attending 108, far short of half. The average cost of education per child £1 12s. 3d. And this, be it remembered, is in a large village, where of course the average of expense ought to be much less than in the country. (I have given the attendance from that year's average, as I could not get that of the succeeding year.)

Surely Mr. Editor, Denominational Schools are not going to "cost the people five-fold" *this average*, or verily, I grant, they will be a ruinous affair. Truly, however, I think we need be under no apprehensions but that the ministers and members of the different denominations will manage their schools at least as economically as the Chief Superintendent of Education.

I think I have also fairly shown that Dr. Ryerson's second assertion—that if Denominational Schools were established "the youth of minor religious persuasions would be left without any means of education save at the expense of their religious faith"—is totally without foundation; since they would be admitted into the schools of the larger denominations without the slightest interference with their own religious principles. Indeed, on the contrary, I have proved, as I stated I would, that such youth would be in a far more desirable condition, as respects their education, than at present: for that they would be members of a school, the intellectual status of which would be more efficiently looked after than under the present system, while its moral securities would be incomparably greater than is possible on the non-religious plan;

and that even the religious training of the child would be cared for, so far as non-interference with the particular religious views of its parents would admit.

The last of the three assertions of the Chief Superintendent which I undertook to answer was, that denominational schools "would leave a large portion of the country without any means of education save as paupers;" this, I think, I have successfully met by showing how they would be admitted, without payment, into religious schools. But there is a *cunning* in this objection unpleasant to a disingenious mind. For, while it is calculated to flatter the pride of the unholy poor, it is not honestly a denominational, but a free-school objection; as in non-religious schools, if not free, the poor must be educated by a charitable rate, just as much as in denominational schools. Hence, the respectable Superintendent would meet this difficulty, by educating the whole province as paupers.

In fact, Denominational Schools are the peculiar RIGHT of the poor; because in the church of GOD the faithful poor are not regarded as paupers, but as fellow members with their wealthier brethren of CHRIST; hence they and their children are cared for as brethren! Yes, give us religious schools, and we will answer for it that the children of the poorest would not only have an education they now too often do not know how to value offered them; but they would be sought out by the ministers of the different denominations, if sometimes with a mixture of sectarian zeal, yet still oftener, I trust, with the holy and patient earnestness of faithful and loving shepherds. In either case the poor would profit, being by the persuasion of love brought under secular tuition combined with religious training. Oh, non-religious schools, whether Free or otherwise, are a heartless fraud upon the rights and the happiness of the poor! But more of this in my subsequent letters. Surely it will not be considered as a valid objection to this scheme, that sometimes the children of smaller denominations would have to be educated at the schools of the

larger ones; especially as I have proved that their *doctrinal* teaching shall not be interfered with; and surely some religious training is better than none! Permit me, on this point, to quote authority whom none will accuse of being too unsectarian, or too liberally inclined. Listen to what the *Shepherd of the Valley*, a Popish journal of the United States, says on this theme: "It would be better to send children to Methodist or Presbyterian schools, if such were in existence, than to these educational institutions of the State. The reason is plain. At the one, your child will be taught that a false religion is true—at the other, that every religion is false."

Again, the same journal says—"It is not lawful to take that which is holy and cast it to the dogs. Your children are the children of GOD by baptism—members of the sacred and mystical body of which CHRIST is the head. Education for them must not be mere learning to read and write and reckon up. This may do for those who accept this world and the things of this world as man's last end and greatest hope. GOD does not require that your children should know these things, and he will not send them to hell for ignorance in these respects. The education of a christian child must be the teaching what he must do for his soul's health, and the acquisition of those habits whereby a Christian life is secured. That your children must learn those things at home, is very true; but that they must not be made to unlearn, and laugh at you for teaching them, at school, is another truth which it will not do to overlook."

O sir, I blush to think how much more scriptural and evangelical are these sentiments, than those low and earthly principles from which our *Protestant* Common School *law sprang*. Adieu.

ADAM TOWNLEY.